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SUBJECT: MAKTOUM FOUNDATION ENTREPRENEURS CONFERENCE

¶1. Summary: This is an action message. Please see paragraph 5. Department requests posts, assistance in identifying key host country entrepreneurs under the age of 40 in Arab and Muslim communities in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Department will draw on these names in proposing invitees to a potential Arab/Muslim Annual Regional Entrepreneurs Conference (AREC) under discussion with the Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum Foundation (the Maktoum Foundation) in Dubai. As plans for the AREC remain subject to change, we request that discussion of the event and potential invitees be restricted to USG only for the time being. (ConGen Dubai is authorized to discuss the concept with the Maktoum Foundation.) Irrespective of whether the proposed AREC takes place, the names will be useful for future outreach activities. End Summary.

¶2. Background: Modeled on the Regional World Economic Forum, the AREC will draw on young and successful entrepreneurs and businessmen/women from Arab and Muslim communities in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The conference objectives will be to: (1) link these

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entrepreneurs with partners and sponsors; (2) host panel discussions on entrepreneurship in Arab and Muslim countries and among large Arab and Muslim communities around the world; (3) showcase "rising stars" in the Arab and Muslim business worlds; (4) highlight indigenous, capitalist Arab and Muslim alternatives to violent extremism; (5) forge new networks of young entrepreneurs to promote job-creation in Arab and Muslim communities, and in the most challenging, predominantly Muslim regions (FATA, South Lebanon, Gaza, etc.)

¶3. Mechanics of the event: We understand the first AREC meeting would take place in Dubai in early 2009 and would be organized, funded and implemented by the Maktoum Foundation (with potentially other sponsors to be determined). The agenda and substance would be determined by sponsors both private and public, but with conceptual input from the USG. Possible panel and event topics may include &unknown success stories⁸, the history of capitalism in Muslim communities, how Islamic principles and capitalism are compatible, how wealth creation empowers Arabs and Muslims, and targeted matchmaking/networking opportunities, as well as possible entrepreneurship training opportunities (mentorships, internships, management training, etc. Speakers will likely include prominent individuals and companies from industries,

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including finance, technology, real estate and media, and government leaders. In addition, young entrepreneurs will be given a platform to share their experiences and express their own views and perspectives. Invitees will be determined by the sponsors, with support and advice from other stakeholders as requested. The ideal mix of speakers and participants will showcase the breadth, success and diversity of wealth creation in Arab and Muslim communities around the world. In addition, success of the meeting requires a framework for ongoing communication and collaboration by participants. Thus it will address common misperceptions related to free markets and the global financial system, as well as specific issues such as the Islamic view of interest on debts. While the Maktoum Foundation will be encouraged to seek suggestions

from the U.S. government and the full range of other public and private stakeholders, the event will primarily reflect non-government Arab and Muslim perspectives and ideas about the role and importance of capitalism in their own societies.

¶4. USG Role. Our role in this effort would be as a conceptual partner and a facilitator. No funds would be required of Post. The Maktoum Foundation has asked that we help them identify potential attendees for the meeting. If the Maktoum Foundation proceeds with the conference, it would

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provide a great opportunity to empower those successful Arab and Muslim businessmen/women with whom Posts have developed positive relationships, and those with whom Posts wish to develop relationships. The overall USG goal is to identify, network and empower Muslim and Arab entrepreneurs (in both indigenous and diaspora communities). Doing so will promote entrepreneurship and, most importantly, elevate role models who will encourage Muslim and Arab youth to pursue opportunities in business.

¶5. Request. We ask that action addressee Posts, in coordination with their constituent posts, identify the following as our contribution to this effort:

a. Names, affiliations, and contact information for ideally at least five businessmen/women and entrepreneurs under the age of 40 in Arab and Muslim communities in your country. There is no maximum number of qualified candidates that Posts may submit. We are seeking maximum diversity of representation, including women, non-Muslim Arabs and non-Arab Muslims. All suggested invitees should be individuals who are not only successful professionally, but have also used their professional success to work for positive change in their country or abroad. An individuals public prominence is less important than professional

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distinction and a demonstrated interest in social and political reform.

b. Names of foundations, companies, training institutes, and other endowments in your country that might be potential conference sponsors.

c. The individuals, companies and entities recommended by Posts should be vetted through country team resources to ensure that those identified meet the high quality of character and substance necessary for a successful conference.

d. Posts are requested to provide an initial list by July 1, ¶2008.

¶6. Posts should send requested names and direct any questions to Stephen Kaplitt (kaplittsb@state.gov/202-647-6683).

¶7. Minimize considered.
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